

CLAIMS

1. A networked sales method, comprising:
presenting via a first network an item on a sales screen to a user,
communicating a variable price schedule for the item to the user,
receiving a reminder command associated with an entry in the schedule from the user, the reminder command including a price selection for the item, and
notifying the user when the entry in the schedule is reached.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the entry is a price entry and wherein the step of notifying notifies the user when the price entry is reached.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the entry is a date entry and wherein the step of notifying notifies the user when the date entry is reached.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of notifying notifies the user through a second network with a near-real-time alerting mechanism.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of notifying notifies the user through a wireless network.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of notifying includes a step of presenting a purchase acceptance control to the user.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein the step of notifying notifies the user through a telephone network and wherein the step of presenting a purchase acceptance control requests that the user signal acceptance using dial keys for a telephone connected to the telephone network.
8. The method of claim 1 wherein acceptance of the reminder command in the step of receiving a reminder command from the user is contingent on the receipt of

contact information in a step of receiving contact information for the user, but wherein the step of presenting the item is independent of the receipt of any contact information from the user.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of receiving a reminder command is responsive to only a single click on a reminder control.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of presenting further presents a plurality of time-separated price choices from a falling-price schedule.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of presenting further presents a plurality of price choices including a present price and at least one future price, and further including the step of displaying a present purchase control button next to the present price and a future purchase control button next to the future price.

12. A network sales system for use in communicating with a sales server via a network, comprising:
an item identification area in a first terminal and responsive to the sales server via the network, and
a plurality of reminder request controls in the first terminal for the same item identified in the item identification area and having outputs provided to the sales server via the network.

13. The apparatus of claim 12 further including an alert signal generator in a second terminal, wherein the alert signal generator is also responsive to the sales server.

14. The apparatus of claim 12 further including a reminder purchase offer control responsive to the sales server.

15. The apparatus of claim 12 wherein the reminder request controls are responsive to only a single click on a reminder control.

16. The apparatus of claim 12 wherein the item identification area is operative to present a series of time-separated future price choices from a falling-price schedule, and wherein the future time-separated price choices are each associated with a one of the plurality of reminder request controls.

17. A networked sales system, comprising:
means for presenting via a first network an item on a sales screen to a user,
means for communicating a variable price schedule for the item to the user,
means for receiving a reminder command from the user associated with an entry in the schedule, the reminder command including a price selection for the item, and
means for notifying the user when the entry in the schedule is reached.

18. A networked sales method, comprising:
presenting via a first network an item on a sales screen,
receiving a supply-driven agent command from a user for the item, and
awarding the item to the user when predetermined supply conditions are reached for the item.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the step of receiving a supply-driven agent command receives a maximum price amount and wherein the step of awarding only awards the item if the price does not exceed maximum price amount.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein the maximum price amount is used to resolve conflicts between supply-driven agent commands received from different users.

21. The method of claim 18 further including a step of monitoring the supply conditions continuously in near real time.

22. The method of claim 18 wherein the step of presenting presents a plurality of time-separated price choices from a falling-price schedule.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein the step of presenting a plurality of price choices displays a present price and at least one future price, and further including the step of displaying a present purchase control button next to the present price and a future purchase control button next to the future price.

24. A network sales terminal for use in communicating with a sales server via a network, comprising:
an item identification area responsive to the sales server via the network, and
a supply-driven agent control for the item identified in the item identification area and having an output provided to the sales server via the network.

25. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein the supply-driven agent control includes a maximum amount selector and a submission control.

26. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein the item identification area presents a plurality of time-separated price choices from a falling-price schedule.

27. The apparatus of claim 26 further including a present purchase control button next to a present price in the plurality of time-separated price choices and a future purchase control button next to a future price in the plurality of time-separated price choices.

28. A networked sales system, comprising:
means for presenting via a first network an item on a sales screen,
means for receiving a supply-driven agent command from a user for the item, and
means for awarding the item to the user when predetermined supply conditions are reached for the item.

29. A networked sales method, comprising:
displaying an item identifier for an item on a sales screen,

displaying a price box for the item on the sales screen, and
displaying via a first network a plurality of price choices for the item in the price
box.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of displaying an item identifier
includes a step of displaying an image of the item on the sales screen and wherein the
step of displaying a price box displays the price box proximate the image of the item.

31. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of displaying an item identifier
includes a step of displaying an image on the sales screen and wherein the step of
displaying a price box displays the price box to overlap the image of the item.

32. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of displaying a plurality of price
choices displays the plurality of choices as a series of user price selection controls.

33. The method of claim 32 wherein the step of displaying a plurality of price
choices displays at least one of the user price selection controls as a control that is
responsive to a single actuation to place a bid on the item.

34. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of displaying a plurality of price
choices displays at least one of the plurality of choices as a user price selection control
that is responsive to a single actuation to place a bid on the item.

35. The method of claim 29 wherein the price box has one curved edge.

36. The method of claim 29 wherein the price box has a circular marking near
one of its edges.

37. The method of claim 29 further including further steps of displaying price
boxes for different items and further steps of displaying price choices for those items on
the same screen.

38. The method of claim 37 further including a step of displaying an image for each of the items on the sales screen.

39. The method of claim 29 further including the step of displaying further price information for the item in response to user interaction with the price box.

40. The method of claim 39 wherein the step of displaying further price information displays the information in a window that overlays an area of the screen in which the price box and the item identifier are displayed.

41. The method of claim 39 wherein the step of displaying is responsive to the user locating a pointing device cursor above a screen area associated with the item.

42. The method of claim 29 wherein the price box further includes an accessorize button that is responsive to user input to retrieve information about items available that complement the item for which the price box is displayed.

43. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of displaying a plurality of price choices displays a present price and a present purchase control button next to it.

44. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of displaying a plurality of price choices displays a future price and a future purchase control button next to it.

45. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of displaying a plurality of price choices displays the plurality of choices as a series of displayed price values each located proximate one of a plurality of purchase control buttons, and wherein the plurality of purchase control buttons includes at least one present purchase control button and at least one future purchase control button.

46. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of displaying a plurality of price choices displays the plurality of choices a series of displayed price values each located proximate one of a plurality of purchase control buttons.

47. A network sales terminal for use in communicating with a sales server via a network, comprising:

an item identification area responsive to the sales server via the network,
a plurality of price choice selection controls for the item identified in the item identification area and having outputs provided to the sales server via the network, and
a price box substantially surrounding the plurality of price choice selection controls.

48. A networked sales system, comprising:
means for displaying an item identifier for an item on a sales screen,
means for displaying a price box for the item on the sales screen, and
means for displaying via a first network a plurality of price choices for the item in the price box.